



## Muskegon Lake Area of Concern Habitat Restoration

The **Boys and Girls Club** restoration project will improve habitat for fish and wildlife by restoring Great Lakes coastal wetlands and creating a natural shoreline where historic pollution currently exists



Boys and Girls Club project shoreline (Photo provided by WMSRDC)

### Project Highlights

Restore 480 feet of shoreline habitat, .25 acres of emergent wetland and .5 acres of open water habitat through native plantings, installation of habitat structures, shoreline grading, and the removal of historic foundry fill and scrap metal

Complement previously funded and implemented Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) projects on adjacent properties.

Funding is provided by GLRI and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Great Lakes Commission (GLC)

#### Environmental Benefits

Improved habitat for native plants and animals

Reduced shoreline erosion

#### Economic Benefits

Increased tourism to Muskegon

#### Community Benefits

Improve fishing, kayaking, canoeing, wildlife watching, picnicking, and aesthetics

## Background of the Area of Concern (AOC)

Within the lower Muskegon River watershed, lies the **Muskegon Lake AOC**, a drowned river mouth lake that flows into Lake Michigan at a shoreline that is part of the world's largest assemblage of freshwater sand dunes. Muskegon Lake was designated an AOC in 1985 due to ecological problems caused by industrial discharges, shoreline alterations and the filling of open water and coastal wetlands.

Since 1992, community groups, governmental and nongovernmental organizations have worked collaboratively to remediate contaminated sediments and to restore and protect fish and wildlife species and their habitats. Historic sawmill debris, foundry sand, and slag filled 798 acres of open water and emergent wetlands in the AOC. Nearly 25% of Muskegon Lake's open water and shallow wetlands were filled and approximately 74% of the shoreline was hardened with wood pilings, sheet metal or concrete. This resulted in the loss and degradation of shallow water benthic (lake bottom) communities, isolation and fragmentation of coastal wetlands, and the associated degradation of water quality and fish and wildlife populations.

This project, along with many others already completed, will address management actions listed for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) to remove Muskegon Lake from the list of Great Lakes "toxic hotspots."

## History of the Site

This project builds on past NOAA and federal investments to restore shoreline habitat at the contiguous Heritage Landing project site and Division Street Outfall Great Lakes Legacy Act contaminated sediment cleanup location. Since Muskegon Lake is a deepwater lake open to Lake Michigan, any fish species that swims in the Great Lakes could benefit from fish habitat installations at this location. Due to the nature and location of the project, the priority fish species are identified as yellow perch, walleye, smallmouth and largemouth bass and northern pike.

The project is on a former YMCA location that is being significantly renovated by The Boys & Girls Club of the Muskegon Lakeshore (BGCML). BGCML was founded in 2014 by a group of community members dedicated to addressing the need for high-quality out-of-school time programming in Muskegon County. The site will have updated recreational facilities, educational programming, public access to the lakeshore, and a fishing dock.

## Project Progress

This project is currently in the design phase in partnership with GEI Consultants. Construction is expected to take place between summer 2023 and spring 2024 followed by post-restoration monitoring during summer 2024.

## Funding and Partners

Approximately \$410,000 of Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) funding is being provided to implement this project. GLRI is a regional program supporting the implementation of a comprehensive restoration plan for the Great Lakes, including cleaning up AOCs. The project funding comes from NOAA through a Regional Partnership with GLC. The project is being managed locally by the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission.

### For More Information

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